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SUBJECT: THE HIGH ISLAMIC COUNCIL - A VIEW FROM THE PROVINCES

REF: A. BAMAKO 580

[1](#)B. BAMAKO 551

Classified By: PolCouns Peter Newman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) In a recent conversation with the Embassy, Kidal's representative to the national High Islamic Council (HCI), Moussa ag Ali, noted the presence of internal tensions between the provincial and national level of the HCI and between ethnic groups represented in the HCI. Moussa's account indicates that the HCI is not a monolithic Islamic force in Mali, but rather a diverse and sometimes fractious organization still attempting to determine its appropriate role in a democratic Mali. End summary.

DISDAINFUL OF AQIM

[1](#)2. (C) By way of background, Moussa ag Ali is one of the Kidal region's leading imams and its representative at the national level of the HCI. Although he is a member of the Dawa movement, a religious organization that arrived in Kidal in the 1990s and which has its origins in Pakistan, Moussa seems to align himself more closely with the Qadiriyya Sufi order, the form of Islam practiced by most Malian Tuaregs. Moussa has a political, as well as a religious role within the Kidal Tuareg community. He remains in close contact, for example, with people like Colonel Hassan ag Fagaga, a former rebel leader and Chief of the ADC's military faction. He also recently traveled to Oubari, Libya to attend the international Tuareg conference hosted by Muammar Khaddafi.

[1](#)3. (C) In a recent conversation with the Embassy, Moussa said he does not consider the Salafists true muslims. He noted that, in his opinion, AQIM and its Salafist adherents violate Islamic law by killing muslims and non-muslims alike without provocation, i.e. without a direct threat to their existence or their religious practice.

DIVERSITY AND TENSION

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Malian press tends to characterize the HCI as a disciplined organization with only one point of view. However, Moussa explained that the HCI's member rolls generally reflect the ethnic and religious composition of the country, and most ethnic groups are represented. The Tijaniyya Sufi order holds the greatest religious influence, followed by the Al-Sunna (reformists), and the Qadiriyya. Moussa said the HCI at the national level is a political bureaucracy, with an executive, a religious, and an administrative committee, which are replicated at the regional and county levels. He noted that elections to the largest and most important executive committee are extremely competitive and political.

[1](#)4. (C) Moussa told the Embassy that ethnic tensions within the HCI tend to run north-south. He expressed frustration

that that the Tuareg community has not been able to place a representative on the national executive committee, despite the fact that he and other Tuaregs are members of the HCI at both national and local levels. Tensions also exist between the national and local levels. Moussa attributes the apparently sudden opposition to the Family Code to poor communication from the national level to the provinces, both on the part of the government but also of the HCI. Just as the GOM did not appear to sufficiently explain the Family Code to regional assemblies and municipalities, neither did the national HCI explain it to the regional and county level HCIs; if they had, Moussa said, they would have understood the groundswell of opposition.

15. (C) Moussa said he believes the executive committee had spoken with the GOM about the Family Code before it was sent to the National Assembly and simply did not take the opportunity to relay the information to the interior of Mali or, for reasons he did not provide, bother to express any opposition to the Code. He commented that after the National Assembly approved the Code and it was made public, the local councils became the driving force behind the national council's forceful and overt opposition to the Family Code.

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